

American Academy of Pediatrics “What’s the Latest With the Flu” Message for Child Care Providers
Sent via Email Listserv on March 4, 2015

2014-2015 Influenza Season

The risk of [Flu](#) has decreased, but remains elevated overall in the United States. Remember that 80% of all influenza illness generally occurs in January, February, and March each year.

Get the Flu Vaccine Now

This year, one of the flu viruses that is causing illness in communities does not perfectly match the virus strains in the vaccine. This may lead to lower vaccine effectiveness against that virus (H3N2). The flu vaccine still offers *some* protection against H3N2, as well as protection against the other flu viruses expected to circulate this year. Some protection is better than no protection. Therefore, the American Academy of Pediatrics (AAP) continues to recommend that all children 6 months and older (and their caregivers), who are eligible for influenza vaccination, be immunized against influenza as soon as possible.

Child care providers should continue to encourage the flu vaccine until the vaccine expiration date (June 30, marking the end of the influenza season), because influenza is unpredictable. After immunization, children generally remain protected for six months or longer. Influenza can have more than 1 disease peak and may extend into March or later. In addition, although the peak of influenza activity in the United States tends to occur in January through March, influenza activity can occur in early fall (ie, October and November) or late spring (eg, influenza circulated through the end of May during the 2013-2014 season). This gives ample opportunity to administer a second dose of vaccine when indicated. It should be noted that internationally, influenza can occur throughout the year. So children traveling overseas may either be at risk themselves or put other children at risk if they are not immunized, regardless of the time of the year.

Antiviral Treatment is an Important Second Line of Defense

As an important second line of defense, influenza antiviral treatment (for example, Tamiflu®) can lessen symptoms and shorten the time people are sick with the flu. It also may prevent serious flu complications. No child is too young to receive antiviral medicines for treatment. When someone has flu symptoms (sudden onset of fever; abdominal pain; chills; cough; croup, bronchiolitis, or pneumonia; decreased energy or feeling a lot more tired than usual; headache; muscle aches and pains; nasal congestion; nausea; sore throat), families should check with their doctor early on in the illness to see if antiviral treatment is recommended.

Practice Proper Cough and Sneeze Etiquette

Staff members and children should be taught to cover their mouths and noses with a tissue when they [cough or sneeze](#), or they should be encouraged to cough into the elbow or shoulder (ie, not into their hands). After coughing/sneezing, everyone should be encouraged to [wash their hands](#) with soap and water. Consider displaying [educational materials](#) in the Head Start or early education and child care program to encourage proper hand hygiene and cough/sneeze etiquette.

Review Immunization Documentation

Programs should review [immunization documentation](#) records to confirm that children have been immunized for influenza. All child care facilities should require that parents/guardians of children enrolled in child care provide written documentation of receipt of immunizations appropriate for each child’s age.

Free Online Training Module

To help prepare your Head Start or early education and child care program, consider taking the free 1-hour AAP/Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC) online course “[Influenza Prevention & Control: Strategies for Early Education & Child Care Providers](#)”. This course educates staff who work in Head Start and other early education

and child care programs about influenza policies and strategies that help keep children healthy. The course is approved for 1.0 contact hour.

Resources

[AAP/CDC Archived Webinar “Improving Head Start/Child Care and Community Readiness and Response to Seasonal Influenza”](#)

[AAP Caring for Our Children Manual](#)

[AAP Healthy Child Care America Web Site](#)

[AAP Managing Infectious Diseases](#)

[AAP Model Child Care Health Policies](#)

[AAP Preparing Child Care Programs for Pandemic and Seasonal Influenza Web Page](#)

[AAP Preventing the Flu: Resources for Parents and Child Care Providers Web Page](#)

[CDC Fact Sheet No More Excuses: You Need a Flu Vaccine!](#)

[Head Start Health Services Newsletter “Preventing and Managing the Flu”](#)

[Families Fighting Flu Web Site](#)

[Flu Information – Free Print Materials from the CDC](#)

[Prevent Childhood Influenza Web Site](#)

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